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INFO CIS COLLECTIVE
EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 000699

NOFORN
SIPDIS
AMEMBASSY ANKARA PASS TO AMCONSUL ADANA
AMEMBASSY ASTANA PASS TO USOFFICE ALMATY
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMEMBASSY BERLIN PASS TO AMCONSUL LEIPZIG
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PASS TO AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI PASS TO AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PASS TO AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PASS TO AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/07/17
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [RS](#) [SR](#)
SUBJECT: SERBIA: CHARGE DELIVERS DEMARCHE ON U.S.-RUSSIA
PRESIDENTIAL SUMMIT

REF: STATE 70576

CLASSIFIED BY: Deborah Mennuti, Political Chief, DOS, POL; REASON:
1.4(D)

Summary

¶1. (SBU) Serbia's leadership expressed pleasure with the results of the U.S.-Russia presidential summit and defended Belgrade's partnership with Moscow as a high-minded exercise of placating Serbia's Russophile population while moving towards Europe. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) The Charge on July 15 delivered reftel points to Serbian MFA Political Director Borislav Stefanovic. Stefanovic said Serbia was happy and satisfied with the new dynamics in the U.S.-Russia relationship, noting that the relationship influenced all countries of the world. He added that the U.S.-Russia relationship was finally moving in the right direction and that his Russian counterparts in Belgrade held the same view.

¶3. (C) Commenting on Serbia's relationship with Russia more broadly, Stefanovic said Serbia continued to be "a Russophile country with a pro-Western government" and that the Serbian government's stance on Russia was aimed at deflating the opposition's ability to capitalize on pro-Russia sentiment and thereby prevent a "situation in Serbia like that in Ukraine." Stefanovic described Serbia's ties with Russia as "cordial, maybe a partnership" but stressed that Serbia's primary objectives were to achieve EU membership while preserving an independent foreign policy. Unlike the rest of Eastern Europe, Stefanovic asserted, Serbia had historical experience with maintaining successful relations with Russia. He said that Serbia's foreign policy was based on a "high level of understanding" that intentionally and strategically kept Russia close. Urging the U.S. to trust Serbia more in this area, Stefanovic argued that "it is naC/ve for others to think we are naC/ve about Russia."

Comment

14. (C) Lacking any real recent relationship with Russia/Soviet Union, as have her neighbors to the north and east, Serbia is indeed naC/ve on the full consequences of a "partnership" with Russia. Serbia continues to believe it has a bridging role to play between Russia and the EU, which is widely scoffed at in European circles. Serbia's current partnership with Russia has resulted in support for Serbia's quixotic and resource-exhausting quest to "keep" Kosovo, but at the price of practically donating to the Russians her oil giant NIS (Nafta Industrija Srbije). Hitting the "reset" button on U.S.-Russian relations will certainly be good news for a Serbian leadership that internally is at contradictory odds with itself. End Comment.
BRUSH